
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1701 Q Street, NW	X	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District		Consent Denial
		X	Concept Review
Meeting Date:	January 24, 2013	X	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	13-95		New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott		Demolition
			Subdivision

Tenant Nicholas Pasquini seeks permit review for installation of a sign on a contributing historic property in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

Property Description

1701 Q Street, NW is a three-story brick and brownstone Romanesque row house located at the corner of 17th and Q Streets, NW. It was originally constructed as a residence and is part of a block-long row of houses on the north and south side of Q Street that was developed and designed by architect Thomas Franklin Schneider between 1889-1892. The block is one of the most distinct and unified in the Dupont Circle district, with an extraordinary variety of materials, detailing and craftsmanship.

The building houses a Century 21 real estate office, with its primary entrance facing Q Street. Q Street remains residential in character and feeling while 17th Street is more commercial in character.

Previous Proposal

In September 2011, the HPRB recommended denial of a permit application for an internally-illuminated 2' x 3' sign proposed to be mounted on the Q Street face of the building. Of specific concern was the sign's size and illumination, and that its installation would cause permanent damage to the building's distinctive masonry. The Board encouraged the applicant to consider alternative locations, installations and designs.

Revised Proposal

The revised proposal calls for suspending a non-illuminated, oval-shaped flat metal sign on metal rods from the underside of the porch's wood ceiling. The sign would measure roughly 2' x 4' x 2" thick, and hang within the building's large first floor Romanesque arch that opens to the entrance porch. The face of the sign would be a weathered brown to match the building's brownstone trim; the letters would be white acrylic.

Evaluation

DC Municipal Regulations 10-C, Chapter 25 ("Standards for Signs, Awnings, Canopies and Marquees"), provides the preservation and design standard for the review of signage for historic property. Like many of the Board's guidelines and standards, the sign standards recognize that the individual qualities of a building and its context need to be considered and evaluated, and that not all solutions are appropriate for all situations.

2303.1

Different historic buildings impose different constraints and may require varied signage solutions. Signage needs also vary by use. For instance, the requirements for a large department store, a small neighborhood retailer, a church, and a home occupation will differ, and signs for each should be tailored to the specific character of each building and entity.

2504.1

Signage shall be appropriate to the building, site, or historic district it will affect. Signage shall relate to, take advantage of, and be compatible with the building's particular composition, scale, design features, and architectural character. It shall be designed with sensitivity to adjacent historic properties, the landscape of historic sites, and the streetscape of historic districts, especially when placed in public space.

In particular, the standards recognize that signs on historic residential buildings should be reviewed with particular care and consideration of the impact of signage on its context.

2503.2

Special considerations apply to residential and institutional signage. Signs are not typically a prominent visual element on historic residential buildings, and commercial signage is strictly limited by the D.C. Building Code within residential and special purpose zoning districts.

2508.1

Signs are not typically a prominent visual element on historic residential buildings. In order to preserve the character and setting of historic residential buildings, signage on these buildings and in historic residential areas shall not be visually intrusive, overwhelming, or incompatible with the significant historic characteristics of the particular building, site, and context.

In color, shape, placement and size, the revised proposal has been developed to respond to the specific character of this building and its context. The background color has been purposely matched to blend with the building's brownstone, and its size remains diminutive in proportion to the arched opening and scale of elements on the building. The sign's placement and installation have been developed in specific response to the building's architectural character, would not obscure important character-defining features, and would not cause permanent damage to the building's distinctive masonry.

As the new sign will provide a clear identification for the property, the HPO recommends that previous efforts at signage – such as the large flagpoles mounted on the second floor – and the “temporary” ground mounted signs in public space should be removed from the Q Street elevation as a condition of approval.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the HPRB find the proposed sign compatible with the character of its location in the Dupont Circle Historic District.